

**PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE
TOWN BOARD
TOWN OF STEPHENTOWN
26 GRANGE HALL ROAD, STEPHENTOWN, NEW YORK 12168
AUGUST 8, 2022**

The Public Hearing of the Town Board, Town of Stephentown was called to order by *Philip Roder* at **7:01PM** at the Town Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

(X) Supervisor Philip (PJ) Roder

(X) Council William Jennings

(X) Council Everett Madden

(X) Council Diana Clark

(X) Council Kyle Kidney

(X) Town Clerk Stephanie Hoffman

(X) High. Superin. Alden Goodermote

(X) Assessor Jennifer VanDeusen

() Constable, Henry Wagar

A quorum (X) was () wasn't established.

8 from the Public were present

Motion to open meeting made by Council Kidney

Seconded by Council Madden

Votes: 5 Aye 0 Nay

This meeting is called by the Stephentown Town Board to discuss the following:

PROPOSED LOCAL LAW # 5 OF THE YEAR 2022 TAX EXEMPTION FOR ALTERNATIVE VETERANS

BE IT ENACTED, by the Town Board of the Town of Stephentown, that the Code of the Town of Stephentown is as follows:

SECTION 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT.

The Town Board hereby exercises the power given to it by § 458-a(2)(d)(ii) of the NY Real Property Tax Law to set the maximum amounts of the assessed value of qualifying residential real property as defined in section § 458-a(1)(d) of the NY Real Property Tax Law that will be exempt from taxation pursuant to § 458-a of the NY Real Property Tax Law.

SECTION 2. AMOUNT OF EXEMPTIONS.

- A. Qualifying residential real property shall be exempt from taxation to the extent of 15% of the assessed value of such property; provided, however, that such exemption shall not exceed \$45,000 or the product of \$45,000 multiplied by the latest state equalization rate for the Town.
- B. In addition to the exemption provided by Subsection A of this section, where the veteran served in a combat theater or combat zone of operations, as documented by the award of a United States campaign ribbon or service medal, or the armed forces expeditionary medal, naval expeditionary medal, marine corps expeditionary medal, or global war on terrorism expeditionary medal, qualifying residential real property also shall be exempt from taxation to the extent of 10% of the assessed value of such property; provided, however, that such exemption shall not exceed \$30,000 or the product of \$30,000 multiplied by the latest state equalization rate for the Town, whichever is less.
- C. In addition to the exemptions provided by Subsections A and B of this section, where the veteran received a

compensation rating from the United States Veteran's Administration or from the United States Department of Defense because of a service-connected disability, qualifying residential real property shall be exempt from taxation to the extent of the product of the assessed value of such property multiplied by 50% of the veteran's disability rating; provided however, that such exemption shall not exceed \$150,000 or the product of \$150,000 multiplied by the latest state equalization rate for the Town, whichever is less. For the purpose of this subsection, where a person who has served in the active military, naval or air service during a period of war died in service of a service connected disability, such person shall be deemed to have been assigned a compensation rating of 100%.

- D. For the purpose of this article, a Gold Star Parent as defined in RPTL § 458-a, Subdivision 7(a), is included within the definition of "qualified owner" contained in section RPTL § 458-a, Subdivision 1(c), and real property owned by a Gold Star Parent is included within the definition of "qualifying residential real property" contained in RPTL § 458-a, Subdivision 1(d), provided that such property is the primary residence of the Gold Star Parent.

SECTION 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This local law shall take effect upon filing with the office of the Secretary of State of the State of New York.

OPEN DISCUSSION TO THE PUBLIC:

No Public Comments

MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 7:05 PM

MOTION BY: JENNINGS

SECONDED BY: KIDNEY

VOTES OF: 5 AYE 0 NAY 0 ABSTAINED

****The next Regular Meeting of the Town Board, Town of Stephentown will be held on Monday, August 15, 2022 at 7:00 PM at the Town Hall located at 26 Grange Hall Road, Stephentown, NY 12168.**

Stephanie M. Hoffman
Town Clerk

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(X) High. Superin. Alden Goodermote

(X) Council William Jennings

(X) Assessor Jennifer VanDeusen

(X) Council Everett Madden

() Constable, Henry Wagar

(X) Council Diana Clark

(X) Council Kyle Kidney

(X) Town Clerk Stephanie Hoffman

A quorum (X) was () wasn't established.

8 from the Public were present

Motion to open meeting made by Council Clark

Seconded by Council Kidney

Votes: 5 Aye 0 Nay

This meeting is called by the Stephentown Town Board to discuss the following:

PROPOSED LOCAL LAW # 6 OF THE YEAR 2022 VETERANS TAX EXEMPTION FOR ELIGIBLE FUNDS

BE IT ENACTED, by the Town Board of the Town of Stephentown, that the Code of the Town of Stephentown is as follows:

SECTION 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT.

Section 458 of the New York Real Property Tax Law ("§ 458") affords certain veterans of military service or certain members of their families who own real property a limited exemption from real estate taxes based upon what the statute calls "eligible funds." Under §458, the maximum amount of the partial exemption is \$7,500. Since properties in the Town currently are assessed at only a fraction of their actual value, a maximum of \$7,500 affords a veteran a reasonable exemption.

Subdivision 5 of § 458 authorizes the Town Board, by local law, to adjust the maximum amount of the partial exemption which § 458 allows to reflect revaluation, thereby continuing to make the exemption produce a reasonable reduction in real estate taxes for those persons entitled to it. Through this enactment, the Town Board exercises the right given to it by Subdivision 5 of § 458.

SECTION 2. ADJUSTMENT OF THE § 458 EXEMPTION.

If, the total assessed value of the real property for which an exemption pursuant to §458 has been granted increases or decreases as the result of a revaluation or update of assessments, and a material change in level of assessment, as provided in Title 2 of Article 12 of Chapter 50-A of the Consolidated Laws of the State of New York, is certified for the assessment roll pursuant to the rules of the Commissioner of Taxation and Finance, the

Assessor shall increase or decrease the amount of such exemption by multiplying the amount of such exemption by the change in level of assessment factor.

SECTION 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This local law shall take effect upon filing with the office of the Secretary of State of the State of New York.

OPEN DISCUSSION TO THE PUBLIC:

No Public Comments

MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 07:05 PM

MOTION BY: JENNINGS

SECONDED BY: KIDNEY

VOTES OF: 5 AYE 0 NAY 0 ABSTAINED

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The Public Hearing of the Town Board, Town of Stephentown was called to order by *Philip Roder* at **7:06PM** at the Town Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

(X) Supervisor Philip (PJ) Roder

(X) Council William Jennings

(X) Council Everett Madden

(X) Council Diana Clark

(X) Council Kyle Kidney

(X) Town Clerk Stephanie Hoffman

(X) High. Superin. Alden Goodermote

(X) Assessor Jennifer VanDeusen

() Constable, Henry Wagar

A quorum (X) was () wasn't established.
8 from the Public were present

Motion to open meeting made by Council Clark

Seconded by Council Kidney

Votes: 5 Aye 0 Nay

This meeting is called by the Stephentown Town Board to discuss the following:

**PROPOSED LOCAL LAW # 7 OF THE YEAR 2022 TAX EXEMPTION OF REAL PROPERTY OWNED BY
PERSONS WITH LIMITED INCOMES WHO ARE DISABLED**

BE IT ENACTED, by the Town Board of the Town of Stephentown, that the Code of the Town of Stephentown is as follows:

SECTION 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT.

To Provide Partial Tax Exemption of Real Property owned by certain persons with limited income who are disabled.

Pursuant to Section 459-c ("§459-c") of the Real Property Tax Law, gives the Town the option of granting a reduction in the amount of property taxes paid by qualifying persons with disabilities and limited incomes.

SECTION 2. APPLICATION PROCESS.

Application for such exemption shall be made annually by the owner or all of the owners of the property on forms prescribed by the State Board and shall be filed in the Town Assessor's office by March 1st or such other date as may be established by law; provided, however, proof of permanent disability must only be submitted in the first year exemption is sought pursuant to § 459-c or the disability is determined to be permanent.

SECTION 3. EXEMPTION ELIGIBILITY.

Persons with Disabilities and Limited Income. Effective as hereinafter provided, there shall be an exemption from

taxation for general Town purposes to the extent of the percentage of assessed valuation provided in the following schedule, determined by the maximum income exemption eligibility level also provided in the following schedule up to a maximum of fifty percent (50%) of the assessed valuation of real property owned by one (1) or more persons with disabilities, at least one of whom has a disability and whose income, as hereinafter defined, is limited by reason of such disability.

ANNUAL INCOME	PERCENTAGE OF ASSESSED VALUATION EXEMPT FROM TAXATION
Not exceed \$29,000	50% exemption
\$29,001 but less than \$30,000	45% exemption
\$30,001 but less than \$31,000	40% exemption
\$31,001 but less than \$32,000	35% exemption
\$32,001 but less than \$32,900	30% exemption
\$32,901 but less than \$33,800	25% exemption
\$33,801 but less than \$34,700	20% exemption
\$34,701 but less than \$35,600	15% exemption
\$35,601 but less than \$36,500	10% exemption
\$36,501 but less than \$37,400	5% exemption

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This local law shall take effect upon filing with the office of the Secretary of State of the State of New York.

OPEN DISCUSSION TO THE PUBLIC:

No Public Comments

MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 7:07 PM

MOTION BY: JENNINGS

SECONDED BY: CLARK

VOTES OF: 5 AYE 0 NAY 0 ABSTAINED

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(X) Council William Jennings
(X) Council Everett Madden
(X) Council Diana Clark
(X) Council Kyle Kidney
(X) Town Clerk Stephanie Hoffman

(X) High. Superin. Alden Goodermote
(X) Assessor Jennifer VanDeusen
() Constable, Henry Wagar

A quorum (X) was () wasn't established.
13 from the Public were present

This meeting is called by the Stephentown Town Board to discuss the following:

REPORT OF THE ARPA COMMITTEE

June 13, 2022

A. Introduction

The Stephentown Town Board requested that Town Council Members Bill Jennings and Diana Clark form a 5 person committee to solicit the best ideas from the community on possible uses for the funds received by the Town of Stephentown as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and to make prioritized recommendations to the Town Board on expenditures of these funds. It was understood that all final decisions on expenditures would be made by the Town Board after conducting a Public Hearing and receiving advice from counsel.

The committee was charged with casting a wide net for ideas on expenditures that would move Stephentown forward following a difficult 2 year period dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, while attempting to satisfy the Final Rule established by the US Treasury on how such funds could be used. This is not an easy task. We have focused on recommending projects that we believe will significantly benefit the Town of Stephentown and its residents. It cannot be guaranteed that they will all be allowed by the US Treasury since gaining prior approval of projects is not possible.

Arlene Longo, Jennifer Peabody and Thomas Quimby were asked and agreed to join the committee. These individuals were selected for their active participation in many community activities and for their willingness to focus on doing what is in the best interest of the Town of Stephentown.

Arlene Longo is currently President of the Stephentown Historical Society (SHS), which has long had a contractual relationship with the Town of Stephentown to provide educational and historical services. She is also Deputy Town Clerk and well aware of the working conditions of the Town Hall. Jennifer Peabody is currently President of the Stephentown Memorial Library (SML) Board of Trustees, which contracts with the

Town to provide the activities of the Youth Commission. She is also an active member of the Stephentown Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD) and the Stephentown Food Pantry (SFP). She was part of a 2-person team that conducted the recent Satisfaction Survey of all Stephentown residents and helped organize and operate the successful Celebrate Stephentown events of a few years ago. Tom Quimby is a member of the Board of Directors of SVFD, which contracts with the Town to provide the services of the Fire Hall for use by the Stephentown Seniors, the Veterans of the Stephentown Area and the Youth Commission. He is also an active SVFD member, a current member of the Zoning Board of Appeals and a Past President of the SML Board of Trustees. Diana Clark is serving her first year on the Town Council and is a member of both the Veterans of the Stephentown Area and SVFD. Bill Jennings has been involved with leadership positions with SVFD, SML, SHS and the Fire Commissioners over the years, as well as a 12 year member of the Town Council.

B. Approach

The committee began meeting in early April 2022 after first receiving advice from Town Attorney Craig Crist. The committee received copies of the Interim Rule, the Final Rule and an Overview of the Final Rule provided by from the US Treasury Department. They also received copies of a Power Point presentation provided by the National Association of Counties on an Overview of the US Treasury's Final Rule and copies of a presentation provided by the NYS Association of Towns on ARPA Reporting. They also were provided with copies of the Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan prepared by Rensselaer County, last updated in July 2020. These resources were discussed in detail during committee meetings.

The committee was given copies of initial ideas received by the Town Board from SVFD and from former Supervisor, Larry Eckhardt. The committee was asked to widely solicit ideas and/or proposals from their many contacts in the community, both from organizations and individuals.

Proposals and/or ideas were received from a variety of sources, including the Fire Chief, the Highway Superintendent, the Ambulance Crew, the Town Clerk, the Youth Commission, the Stephentown Seniors, the Town Council and individual residents. The committee bases this report on the ideas or proposals received by May 11, 2022, but believes the process for accepting new ideas or proposals should be kept open by the Town Board until all funds are designated.

The committee first worked to identify a small number of higher level projects that might combine multiple individual projects, and to prioritize these higher level projects. Prioritization was based on criteria such as increasing emergency preparedness, likelihood of acceptance by the US Treasury, and overall benefit to the Town of Stephentown. The committee then worked to prioritize the individual projects within each of the higher level projects. Finally, it assigned initial monetary allocations to each of the higher level projects and subsequently to each of the individual projects, with the total approaching \$294,152.96, which is the total amount expected to be received. It is understood that these allocations are initial recommendations and could well be changed by the Town Board when actual cost estimates are available.

The committee emphasizes that exact dollar amounts for projects cannot be identified at this time. Many proposed expenditures are subject to formal RFP processes. In addition, prices of almost everything are extremely volatile at this point of time. Further, we recognize the possibility that some of the recommended projects will be deemed by the Town Board not to meet the fairly stringent requirements established by the US Treasury. We present our recommendations as a Guideline to the Town Board, which we feel is representative of the needs and priorities of the community.

C. Prioritized Higher Level Projects

The committee organized the ideas and proposals into 5 prioritized, higher level projects, differentiated primarily on how we perceive that these projects might be funded. In all cases, we believe the proposed expenditures fit under the umbrella of government services normally expected to be provided by the Town of Stephentown.

We believe these projects, if funded by ARPA monies, should all be reported under the Revenue Loss category provided by the US Treasury in the Final Rule, which allows up to the full amount of the award to be assumed to be Revenue Lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe these are all government services projects that could readily be funded following the normal budgeting processes of the Town of Stephentown if there had been additional revenue available.

In each category we provide a recommended allocation of funds. This allocation should, in most cases, be considered as “up to the allocated amount”. If actual costs are higher, then we encourage that cost sharing from other sources be considered. If any funds remain after prioritized projects are completed, we recommend that all remaining funds be allocated to the Highway Department.

The recommended prioritized, higher level projects are:

1. Emergency Preparedness Projects: Allocation: \$100,000

These are projects driven by the Rensselaer County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan which calls for the Town Hall, the Fire Hall and the Highway Garage to provide emergency operations and shelter during an emergency. The Plan clearly indicates the steps that need to be taken to prepare these buildings for emergency use. We believe these are new projects that should be funded directly from the General Fund of the Town Budget using ARPA funds. The proposed expenditures are one-time expenditures, with the expectation that any on-going maintenance will be provided by the normal budgeting process.

2. Town Hall Projects: Allocation: \$75,000

These are projects aimed at improving the working environment and services provided at the Town Hall, both for emergency preparedness and normal municipal services. These projects we believe should be funded by adding funds directly to existing budget lines in the General Fund, using ARPA funds. These are one-time expenditures, with the expectation that any on-going maintenance will be provided by the normal budgeting process.

3. Highway Projects: Allocation: \$70,000

An overall allocation is made to the Highway Department, but with the understanding that the decision on specific projects should be left to the Highway Superintendent, in consultation with the Town Board. The committee is of the opinion that any normal projects undertaken by the Highway Department meet the criteria for expenditure of ARPA funds.

4. Contractual Service Projects: Allocation: \$30,000

These are projects aimed at increasing the contractual services provided by existing Stephentown organizations. We believe they should be funded by increasing the amounts in the General Fund budget lines for these organizations, with a corresponding change in the formal contractual arrangements to specifically identify the increased services expected.

We understand that the increased amounts are only for a limited time period, to be specified in the contracts, and need to be consistent with the requirements for the expenditure of ARPA funds. Any continuation of these increased services would be part of the normal budgeting process.

5. New Community Services: Allocation: \$25,000

These are new projects with the potential of significantly improving services to the community. Some are viewed as “pilot” projects, with any on-going funding to be decided at a later date after thorough evaluation of costs and benefits. New, specific funding mechanisms would need to be created for these projects.

D. Prioritized Specific Projects:

Within each of the 5 higher level projects, we provide a prioritized list of specific projects that we recommend be funded. Very preliminary cost estimates are provided for each project. It is understood that actual costs might very well mean that projects of lower priority are not funded at this time.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Emergency Preparedness: | Total Allocation: \$100,000 |
| • Backup Electric Generators: | Allocation: \$80,000 |
| • 911 Address Signs: | Allocation: \$15,000 |
| • Emergency Communication System | Allocation: \$5,000 |
| 2. Town Hall: | Total Allocation: \$75,000 |
| • IT Infrastructure for Video-streaming | Allocation: \$10,000 |
| • Heat Pumps for A/C, Auxiliary Heat | Allocation: \$30,000 |
| • Propane for Heat and Hot Water | Allocation: \$25,000 |
| • Digitizing Town Data | Allocation: \$10,000 |
| 3. Highway Projects: | Total Allocation: \$70,000 |
| • Several specific projects were discussed, some brought forward by the Highway Superintendent and some brought forward by the committee. The committee believes that final decisions on how the funds should be spent should be left to the Highway Superintendent, in consultation with the Town Board. | |
| 4. Contractual Service Projects: | Total Allocation: \$30,000 |
| • Fire Hall Access for Summer Camp | Allocation: \$2,500 |
| • Field Trips for Summer Camp | Allocation: \$2,500 |
| • Storage at Heritage Center | Allocation: \$20,000 |
| • Lunches for Seniors (Pilot) | Allocation: \$5,000 |
| 5. New Community Projects: | Total Allocation: \$25,000 |
| • Transportation (Pilot) | Allocation: \$15,000 |
| • Business and Organization Directory | Allocation: \$5,000 |
| • Community Communication (Pilot) | Allocation: \$5,000 |

E. Other Projects:

Proposals for several other projects were submitted to the committee but did not make the final recommended list for a variety of reasons. The specific proposals will be passed on to the Town Board for possible consideration, perhaps using other funding sources. A brief listing follows:

- Playground Area: This was one of the ideas receiving considerable support in the recent town-wide satisfaction survey. At this time, the committee does not have a specific opportunity to recommend.

- Permits/Bags at Transfer Station for Seniors: We believe this idea has merit, but it is not yet understood how best to implement a program that would focus on those who most need assistance.
- 2nd Community Survey: The committee believes a follow-up survey should happen, but only after ARPA funds are expended to gauge impact. Other funding sources should be considered.
- Online Dog Licensing: The committee believes this should be implemented by the Town Clerk as soon as possible since it will benefit many residents. It is relatively low cost and should just be done.
- Electric Stretcher for Ambulance: The committee supports the purchase of such a stretcher, but believe it is best done directly by the Fire District.
- Food Preparation and Storage at the Fire Hall: The committee believes that this proposal is not directly needed for Emergency Preparedness, although it would allow the Fire Department to better serve the community.

F. Conclusion:

The ARPA Committee has recommended prioritized projects for consideration by the Town Board for using the funds provided by the American Rescue Plan Act. We believe these projects represent the best thinking at this time for how best to help Stephentown recover from a multi-year pandemic and to be prepared for the next challenging event. We understand that the monies do not need to be obligated until December 31, 2024, but we recommend beginning the process as soon as possible. It is entirely possible that new needs and ideas may come forward at any time during the process and we urge flexibility.

OPEN DISCUSSION TO THE PUBLIC:

Council Jennings presents an overview of the plan the Committee drafted.

Supervisor Roder thanks the committee members for all the work they put into gathering information and creating a plan. Explains the Final Rule is very strict and some of those ideas are very black and white and some are a grey area. This plan is ideas nothing set in stone we are requesting public input on how the public would like us to allocate the funds.

Kevin James asks where the regulations on the funds could be found.

Council Jennings the US Department of Treasury website it is called the Final Rule.

K. James asks if the board considered having solar panels.

Council Jennings reported the board tried a few years ago and no one was interested because the Town didn't use enough energy, not attractive as we had hoped.

David Corlew expressed that the 911 signage would be very beneficial to the fire department and for emergency services. As Chief of the Fire Dept. it is very difficult to locate an emergency without proper signage.

Rik McClave provided examples of how difficult it was to find homes in the middle of the night who had emergencies and no signage. It's approximately \$35.00 per sign and there are about 1000 properties in Stephentown the amount allocated is not close to what is written in the plan and this project would be beneficial to everyone in the town. Berlin did this approximately 10 years ago and it cost them \$25,000.

Supervisor Roder asked Fire Chief Corlew if he had any further information on the grant funding for the sign project.

D. Corlew will follow up with the County, haven't heard from them since he gave them the paperwork.

Supervisor Roder we need to move forward and consider this project.

Sarah Thompson spoke about the Stephentown Survey for Organizations and getting a Small Business directory managed by the Town.

Anita Henry expressed there is a lot of good ideas but not sure how some of these fall into the ARPA frame work?

Council Jennings the rules (174 pages) don't say it has to be pandemic related. There are four ways to spend it. They created three sections and people were not pleased so they created a fourth section "loss of revenue" for "government services". We provide contractual funds to these organizations to provide services.

S. Thompson believes that the organization directory would fall under the umbrella, due to the pandemic creating communication problems.

Supervisor Roder this is just a plan nothing in stone.

Council Clark we are requesting community input.

Louise Henry owner of Braveheart Books reported that she created a directory with the library and historical society called Stephentown Business Connect. Would like to take this project and manage it. Received a lot of information from Arlene Longo, President of the Historical Society and would like any other information others have.

Supervisor Roder its hard for the town board to manage something like this, we are an auditing board and the next person might not want to take it over.

K. James the plan states \$75,000 to the highway, that's a drop in the bucket. Believes the highway should be a priority.

Highway Superintendent Goodermote expressed how much these have changed over at the highway department in regards to expenses, three bridges need to be replaced, all the funds wouldn't replace one. Expressed to the board to put all the funds to the highway department because everyone in town uses the roads/highways, it's a service everyone needs.

Jennifer Peabody expressed interest in 2pilot programs, community transportation and communication. Transportation would be beneficial to seniors who can't get to appointments, we can gather volunteers to help with transportation. Anyone of these projects could certainly take up all the funds.

Bill Film Director at Tax Services provides information on how funds were allocated in Sand Lake, a ton of funds were allocated to the Highway department, we had Community Transportation but had a difficult time finding volunteers and it fell through we have allocated funds in an Uber account to help those with transportation issues, digitizing records we wrote a grant for NYS Archives normally opens in February/March.

Town Clerk Hoffman do they work with Court Records as well?

B. Film not positive Sand Lake did tax records.

R. McClave some people will call the ambulance for a rider to their appointments.

Highway Superintendent Goodermote the signage is a good idea but who is going to volunteer to put the signs up? Been coming to these meetings since 1985 and have heard some great ideas but unless you have volunteers it doesn't happen.

Supervisor Roder if anyone has further comments or ideas they can submit them to the Town Clerk to be provided to the Town Board for review.

MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 8:06 PM

MOTION BY: JENNINGS

SECONDED BY: CLARK

VOTES OF: 5 AYE 0 NAY 0 ABSTAINED

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